

Session 1 (Before Break)

Aims

- To retell the Easter story, remembering the main events.
- To explore the emotions experienced by characters in the Easter story and how these resonate with pupils.
- To consider why the Easter story is so important for Christians.

1. Host a circle time to explore with pupils what Easter means for them. Set up your circle with an additional space.

Q: Does your family do anything special at Easter? What?

Q: Do you receive chocolate or have an Easter egg hunt? Is there a reason for this?

Q: Does anyone go to church or attend a sunrise service? Why?

2. Remaining in the circle, introduce the day.

We are going to be using drama to help us look more deeply at the Easter story, wondering together what it would have felt like for some of those present as they participated in the events of Easter week. Before we start, we shall first examine some of our own emotions that we might bring with us today.

Ask the children to remain in silence for this next activity. There is no need for them to explain their movements. Do not ask questions about any of their movement choices. If any of the statements that you read out apply to them, the pupils can choose to stand up and travel across the circle and take a different seat. [Have an additional space present in your circle so that if only one child moves, there is a new space for them to go to.]

Read through the statements below. You may wish to skip or replace some statements if they could be too personal or painful for some of your pupils.

- 'You may choose to cross the circle to a new space if...'
- 'You ate toast for breakfast.'
- 'You walked to school today.'
- 'Your favourite lesson is PE.'
- 'You have a brother.'
- 'Someone has read a story with you this week.'
- 'You have moved house during your life.'
- 'You have ever been on a really long journey that took more than half a day.'
- 'You have been part of a really large crowd (like a football match, concert or protest).'
- 'You have a special friend who knows you really well.'
- 'You have ever had a close friend or family member die.'
- 'You have ever been let down by a friend or family member.'
- 'You have ever been made to feel left out of something.'
- 'You have ever been lost.'
- 'You have been so excited for something that you have struggled to go to sleep.'
- 'You have ever been mean to a friend, or let a friend down.'

- ‘You have ever spent time on your own pondering ‘big’ questions like: ‘Why are we here? Why is so much wrong with the world?’ Or other big questions about God or death.’
- ‘You have ever felt really alone or lonely.’
- ‘You have ever been asked to do something really painful or challenging that you did not want to do but were brave enough to do it anyway.’
- ‘You have ever been really confused by something.’
- ‘You have ever been so shocked or surprised that you were speechless or cried.’

As we look at the events of Easter, you may find that your experience of these emotions connects with those of the crowd, disciples or Jesus at different points in the story.

3. **Drama warm-up.**

Just as we warm-up for PE or do ‘mental maths’ to warm-up for maths, we are going to warm-up for drama. Have the class stand in the circle facing outwards. Explain you are going to give them an emotion and then count down from twenty (thinking time) and on ‘zero’ they have to spin around and give you their best ‘freeze’ pose to show that emotion. Praise pupils for elements that really express that emotion.

**Fear
Anger
Joy
Anxiety
Excitement
Guilt**

4. **Retell the Easter story, broken into chunks. (The story is at the end of this resource).**

We are about to work together to retell a shocking story. Some of it is extremely uncomfortable and troubling. However, it is important that we engage with this event as it has had such a huge impact on the world. Even locally, we find roads, buildings, schools, hospitals and more are still named after the characters in this story. And our calendar has been organised around the central character (BC and AD)!

Looking at the events just before the climax of the Easter story will help us to better understand why the eyewitnesses were so amazed...

Seat the pupils back in the circle and go round numbering them from 1-6. Start with all the #1’s in the middle. As you read the first chunk of the narration, pupils are to spontaneously work together to act out the story (for classes that need support with this, consider having a few simple props to denote roles e.g. a staff for Jesus, headdresses/headscarves for disciples or crowd, a religious artefact for the Jewish leaders to hold, a sword or a shield for soldiers etc.). Continue rotating through the groups until the story is told and all groups have had a turn to act.

5. **Interrogate the story.**

We are going to think about why the Easter story is pivotal to the Christian faith.

- Set up stations for pupils to experience different definitions of the word ‘pivot’. For example:
 - Pupils could work in threes to receive a netball pass, pivot and then pass the ball off in a different direction. Can they think of other sports where they have to pivot/suddenly change direction? (It can be a good strategy in tag!)
 - Pupils could also work in groups to play with cylinders (e.g. toilet rolls or glue sticks) and rulers to see if they can find balance points.
 - Pupils could play with old-fashioned scales to find the equilibrium (use weights on one side and objects on the other).

b. Ask the question: **In what ways does the Easter story act as a pivot point for the Christian faith?** Answers might include the below:

| Type of Pivot | Purpose of Pivot | How does this relate to the Easter Story being a Pivot point for Christians? |
|-----------------------|--|---|
| Netball | Sharp change of direction. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Many disciples, followers and witnesses turned from not seeing Jesus as God to seeing differently and believing that Jesus is God. • Christians believe that Jesus' death and resurrection enable them to turn from their old life (as enemies of God) and start a new life (as friends with God). • Christians believe that meeting Jesus today will be the most significant turning point of anyone's life. |
| Scales / Ruler | Show when things are in or out of balance. | The accounts of the crucifixion and empty tomb need to be weighed to make sense of the events and work out if they have any relevance for us today. |

c. Tell the pupils how St Paul writes about this in the Bible, and that his words were recorded in **1 Corinthians 15:17**:

**‘Unless Christ was raised to life,
your faith is useless, and you are
still living in your sins.’ (CEV)**

d. Why might St Paul have said these words? Why does he see the resurrection as the pivot point of faith? Possible answers include:

- The resurrection shows the power of God.
- It validates who Jesus claimed to be. Jesus claimed to be God, performed miracles that only God could and prophesied that he would die and rise again after 3 days (Mark 8:31).
- It sets us free from our sin. 1 John 4:10 says: ‘Real love isn’t our love for God, but his love for us. God sent his Son to be the sacrifice by which our sins are forgiven.’ (CEV)
- It gives hope for when we die. Jesus said (John 3:16): ‘God loved the people of this world so much that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who has faith in him will have eternal life and never really die.’ (CEV)
- It is possible to examine the evidence for and against whether or not it happened by asking questions such as:
 - ◇ What is the evidence that Jesus actually died?
 - ◇ What happened to his body?
 - ◇ What do you make of accounts that people saw him alive again, e.g. the disciples (John 20:19-29), and 500 others all at once (1 Corinthians 15:6)?
 - ◇ Why would the disciples be prepared to suffer extremely painful deaths if they knew the resurrection was not true?